

October 16, 1998

Clinton Set to Double Presidential Travel Record

He's Already Set Records for Trips, Days, and Pace of Overseas Travel

Many people have wondered: What will be President Clinton's legacy? How will history remember him? Considering his foreign travel record, Clinton is likely to be better remembered by geography than by history. He already holds every presidential record for international travel — despite being not yet midway through his second term. Likely, by year's end he (in six years) will have fully doubled the presidential foreign travel record.

When Bill Clinton was running for office in 1992, he attacked President Bush for being the "foreign policy president," but since then, President Clinton has become the "foreign travel president" [see attached graph, Clinton's International Travel]. Even using a conservative count:

Clinton holds the record for

- ▶ **foreign trips by a U.S. president: 32;**
- ▶ **days abroad: 154; and**
- ▶ **rate of foreign travel: 27 days per year.**

It is not as though America is free from problems at home. We face an agricultural crisis, and the need to reform Social Security, Medicare, and our tax system. Too bad that while there are important issues at home, we have a President who is too often not.

Clinton's Bulging Passport: Record-breaking 32 Trips

In 1992 then-candidate Clinton excoriated President Bush for taking 25 trips to 60 countries during his tenure, sanctimoniously stating, "It is time for us to have a president who cares more about Littleton, New Hampshire than about Liechtenstein: more about Manchester than Micronesia." Once in office, however, Clinton seemed intent on breaking the Bush record, and did so with his 27th trip abroad (according to the 11/21/97 *Christian Science Monitor*) to Canada on November 22, 1997.

To date, President Clinton has taken a record-breaking 32 trips to 78 countries (including 51 different ones) with trips to South Korea, Japan, and Malaysia planned for later this year. Evidently, Clinton's solution to President Bush's travel was to visit not only Littleton, New Hampshire, but Liechtenstein — and everywhere else in between.

Clinton Shatters Presidential Foreign Travel Record: 154 Days

In just this year's foreign travel so far, President Clinton has visited 11 countries and spent 41 days overseas. He has chalked up a grand total of 154 days of foreign travel. And this is a conservative estimate (we use as our source White House figures for 1993-97, and for 1998, for which White House figures are not yet available, we rely on press reports; we note that press reports from the 1993-1997 time period we accumulated account for 8 more days abroad than did the White House).

How does this stack up with the foreign travel of other presidents? It establishes another Clinton record [see graph, U.S. Presidents' International Travel]. President Clinton's foreign travel is likely by year's end to double that of President Bush, the same president he attacked for traveling abroad too much.

Record-breaking 26.8 Days per Year Exceeds Bush Travel by 25 Percent

Comparing the travel of one president to another, as above, obviously covers different time-frames, but even looking at days of travel per year, Clinton shatters the record. President Bush averaged 21.5 international travel days per year, compared to 26.8 for Clinton [see graph, Average Days of International Travel Per Year].

Aesop's fable about the tortoise and the hare examines the two elements of a race: consistency and speed. In the case of President Clinton and foreign travel, he's both tortoise and hare — traveling abroad at a consistently accelerating pace. In 1993-94 and 1995-96, Clinton's 41 days and 39 days abroad put him roughly on President Bush's pace. Then, in 1997-98, Clinton's 74 days (to date) puts him at almost double Bush's pace. Clinton's 27 day-a-year travel pace is 25 percent greater than was Bush's.

What Compares to the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Gulf War?

Any way you count it — trips, days, or pace — President Clinton holds the record for presidential foreign travel. White House spin-doctors might claim that this was in response to pressing international events. Compare the events then with those of the Bush presidency: during the Bush Administration's first two years, the Soviet Union and communism in Europe collapsed — the Berlin Wall fell on November 11, 1989; during the Bush Administration's last two years, the Persian Gulf War was planned, fought, and won — Desert Storm began on January 6, 1991.

These two international events rank among the most significant of the last generation, if not the last half-century. Compared to the historic events that marked the Bush presidency, what foreign policy events have occurred to justify President Clinton's record-breaking foreign travel?

Clinton's Presidency: More Postcards than Proposals

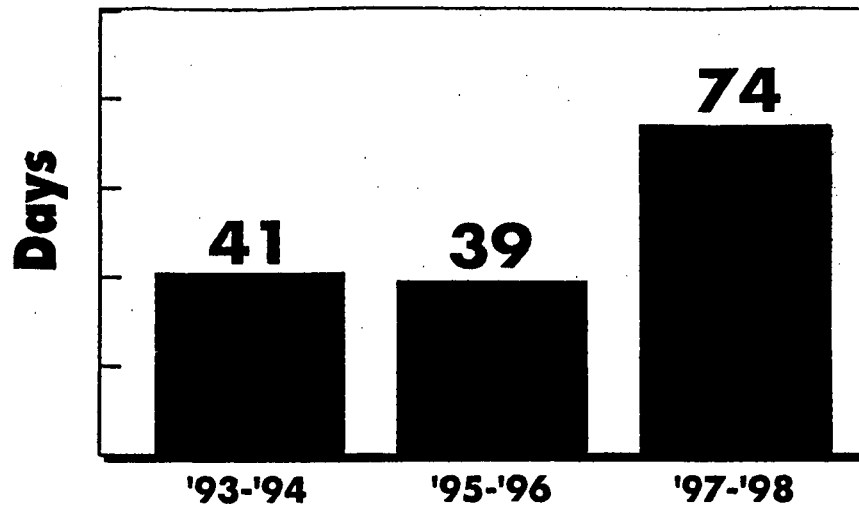
If Bill Clinton needed a passport to handle the agricultural crisis, had to pack a bag to address Social Security, needed a plane ticket to cut taxes, or had to cross time zones to deal with managed care reform, maybe he would have tackled these tasks.

If foreign trips were home runs, Bill Clinton would be Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa rolled into one . . . and perhaps Ruth and Mantle as well.

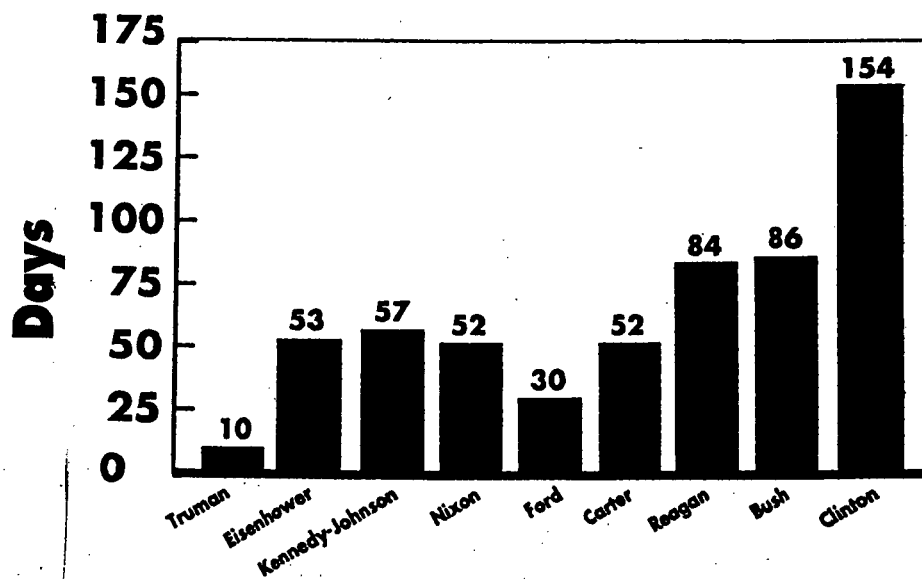
When the year is done, but the important business of America isn't, it should be no wonder that President Clinton could not work on all the important issues at home: He was hardly here.

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Charts referenced in this paper are attached.

Clinton's International Travel



U.S. Presidents' International Travel



Average Days of International Travel Per Year

